



January 22, 2009

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Google Ads**Azteca: La Piedra del Sol (DVD)**

Azteca were a Latin jazz-rock band who formed in the early 1970's after brothers Coke and Pete Escovedo left Santana. They released two albums, *Azteca* (1972) and *Pyramid of the Moon* (1973), before splitting up due to internal problems, lack of a 'hit', and rampant drug & alcohol problems. The band were notorious for their extended line-up, which at times contained close to 20 members, including multiple horn, reed, keyboard, guitar, and percussion players, as well as numerous singers. Azteca alumni include drummer Lenny White (Return to Forever, Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard), bassist Paul Williams (Herbie Hancock's Headhunters), trumpet player Tom Harrell (Horace Silver), Sheila E (Pete Escovedo's daughter), and Neal Schon (Journey, Santana), among many others. In September of 2007, the band reunited for a show at the Key Club in Hollywood, California, playing together for the first time in more than 30 years. This DVD *La Piedra del Sol* documents the events leading up to the band getting back together, the rehearsals, and the eventual show.



Though band leader Coke has since passed away, Director/Producer Daniel Meza managed to assemble quite a few of the original surviving members for this reunion, including Pete Escovedo (timbales/percussion/vocals), White (drums), Williams (bass), Wendy Haas (vocals/percussion), Errol Knowles (vocals/percussion), Victor Pantoja (conga/vocals), Jules Rowell (trombone), Bill Courtial (guitar), Murray Low (keyboards), Melecio Magdaluyo (flute/sax), Mario Gonzalez (trumpet), and Alex Murzyn (piccolo/sax). The music is a pretty exciting mixture of rock, jazz, soul, R&B, and Latin styles, heavy on groove and with plenty of spots for solos. This near 3 hour DVD plays like an actual documentary, interviews with the band members mixed in with rehearsal footage and songs from the actual live concert. It's obvious that, even though the band were together only a few short years and never really achieved their goals, that it remained very special to the musicians over the years, as there are plenty of happy memories and emotions shared here. Even Director Meza,

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who was not even born when Azteca were together, shows his love and loyalty to the music of a band that truly touched his heart. Conga player Pantoja's interview segments are not only hilarious but touching as well, as he reminisces (over quite a few beers) about the early days of the band and how much it meant to him, and he gets quite emotional about the fact that the band imploded, and angry when discussing the former members who decided not to take part in the reunion. The live segments are quite fun to watch, Sheila E even makes an appearance on the large scale jam "Whatcha Gonna Do", as the stage is packed with the band and family members for a rousing number flavored with Latin beats and rock power.

Kudos to Daniel Meza for putting this together, as I'm sure for many Azteca might have passed them by the first time around. Along with this DVD, the band is releasing a CD of the show called *From the Ruins*, and future live shows look to be a reality, so make sure to keep an eye on the Aztec website for additional information on that.

Featured Songs

Mamita Linda
Ain't Got No Special Woman
Find Love Today
Azteca
Non Pacem
Someday We'll Get By
Peace Everybody
Whatcha Gonna Do
New Day Is on the Rise

Added: January 11th 2009

Reviewer: Pete Pardo

Score: ★★★★★

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